

Take-home Activity 3: Brushing to the Beat!



At school, your child is learning about what happens in his or her mouth to cause tooth decay. This take-home activity will reinforce proper brushing as a way to prevent tooth decay. Have fun “brushing to the beat”!

Materials

1 watch with a second hand
toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste

Procedure

1. While you time him, ask your child to brush his teeth. Do not let him see your watch. Tell him to stop brushing when he thinks he has brushed for two minutes, the recommended length of time to clean the teeth thoroughly.

How long did your child really brush? _____

Is this more or less than two minutes? _____

2. If your child uses the proper technique, it is difficult not to brush for two minutes because it takes more time when done correctly. Review with your child the technique outlined in the *Background Information* (see reverse side).
3. It is more fun to brush to music. Think of a short, simple song that you and your child can hum all the way through, like *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* or *Pop Goes the Weasel*, and record it on the Certificate of Completion. Then, hum it. Use your watch to see how long it takes you and your child to hum the song one time. Record the time on the Certificate of Completion.
4. How many times would you need to hum your song to make it last for two minutes? (For example, if one time through takes you 20 seconds, you would need to hum your song six times to make it last for two minutes.) Record the number of repeats on the Certificate of Completion. (If you need to estimate, go long—the extra brushing won’t hurt!)
5. Now, try it. Have your child hum as she brushes her teeth. Help her keep count of the number of repeats. When she has brushed and hummed for the correct number of repeats, she’s done. If your child uses this technique each time she brushes, she always will brush long enough to remove the bacteria that cause tooth decay.

Certificate of Completion

(complete and return to your child’s teacher)

Song title _____

Time it takes to hum once _____ Number of repeats to last two minutes _____

Parent’s or guardian’s signature _____

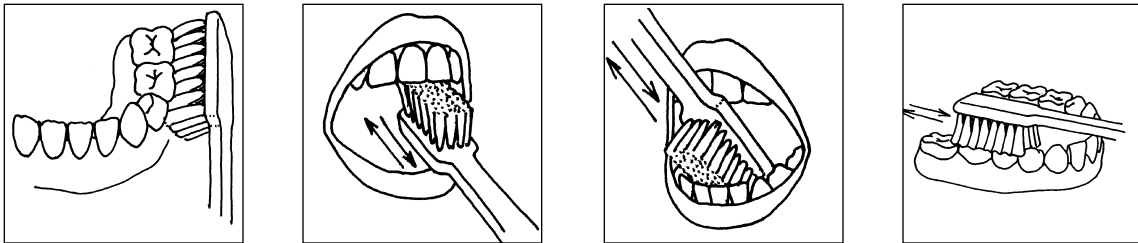
Child’s signature _____

Background Information

Your child has been learning about what can happen in the mouth to cause tooth decay. Ask your child to tell you about the following things:

- Bacteria that live in the mouth are living organisms.
- Like all living things, bacteria eat, reproduce, and excrete waste.
- The waste that bacteria excrete is an acid that dissolves the tooth enamel.
- Bacteria like to feed on sugars and starches best. When you eat more sugary foods, the bacteria thrive. They eat more, reproduce more, and excrete more acid.
- To decrease the amount of acid in your mouth, you should avoid frequent snacking, especially sugary foods and drinks. You also should brush your teeth to remove bacteria, and the food particles that feed the bacteria, which together make a sticky film called plaque.

Dental professionals say that it takes **at least two minutes** of brushing to clean all the teeth and remove the plaque from the teeth. The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends the following procedure, using a pea-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste on a toothbrush with soft bristles:



- Brush outer surfaces with tips of bristles angled against the gum line. Move the brush back and forth with short strokes about one tooth wide.
- Brush inside surfaces.
- Brush chewing surface of the tooth by holding the brush flat.
- Brush inside surface of front teeth, top and bottom.
- Brush top of the tongue to remove more bacteria.

It is important to brush your teeth at least once a day, visit a dental health professional regularly, and eat a balanced diet to keep your mouth healthy.
